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SUBJECT: U.N.'S GENERAL DEBATE WRAP-UP: HITTING THE HIGH
NOTES

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: U.N. member states focused on four main topics and touched on others during the opening of the 64th General Assembly. Climate change dominated the speeches, with calls for United Nations reform, particularly pertaining to the Security Council, coming in second. Other central issues were the financial crisis and addressing the needs of developing countries. Finally disarmament and non-proliferation was addressed by many speakers. Outside these well elaborated themes, many speakers mentioned the situation in Honduras, the Palestinian issue, Iran's nuclear program, and the embargo on Cuba. END SUMMARY

CLIMATE CHANGE

¶2. (U) Before the General Debate opened, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon held a summit on climate change on September 22 as a prelude to the upcoming December meetings in Copenhagen (septel). The summit set the tone for the General Debate involving 100 heads of state or government. All agreed that climate change presents a pressing problem requiring immediate solutions. Many focused on how to assist developing countries in addressing the issue. Several Europeans spoke about their plan to raise \$100 billion yearly over the next decade to fund mitigation and adaptation efforts. In general, developing nations placed the blame and most of the responsibility to deal with the results of climate change squarely on developed nations.

UNITED NATIONS REFORM

¶3. (U) U.N. reform focused on Security Council expansion. Several leaders specifically mentioned permanent seats for Africa and Latin America, while complaining about Europe having more than one seat. Calls for the United Nations to become a more democratic body has become code for opening up the Council's membership.

DEVELOPMENT AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

¶4. (U) Many speakers blamed the richest nations for the global economic crisis. Several leaders called for a new conference organized by the U.N. to replace the current Bretton Woods organizations. Additionally, several speeches called for renewed vigor in developmental assistance, cautioning that the global economic crisis should not reduce the world's efforts to assist the poorer nations. Food security remained high on the list of developmental assistance advocates.

DISARMAMENT

¶5. (U) Disarmament issues raised spanned from nuclear

non-proliferation to total disarmament and the dismantling of the global military industrial complex. Latin American and African nations complained about the influx of small arms from developed nations. After the revelation of the Iranian nuclear facility at Qom, debate on the issue shifted more to nuclear non-proliferation and Iran's nuclear program.

POLITICAL HOT BUTTONS FROM HONDURAS TO PALESTINE

¶6. (U) Several speakers called for an end to the United State's embargo of Cuba. The plight of the Palestinians came up, with members usually insisting on a two-state solution. The need to reform the Security Council was often linked to the Palestinian issue. The coup in Honduras routinely was mentioned, coupled with rebukes for the ouster of the democratically-elected government. Some speakers bemoaned the plight of the Brazilian Embassy in Honduras, punished for harboring the ousted leadership.
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